

Activists tell grain exporter to 'Respect the Union Waterfront'

"Respect the local workforce, and make tons of money for years to come."

That's the message that union activists have been sending to EGT Development regarding its massive new grain terminal at the Port of Longview, Washington.

"Union longshore workers have made the Northwest one of the most productive grain exporting regions in the world," said Dan Coffman, president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 in Longview. "This new grain terminal stands to gain by playing by the same rules as the other grain operators that are making lots of money with productive union workers."

Slated to begin operating this summer, the \$200 million grain elevator on the north bank of the Columbia River is a state-of-the-art facility built by EGT Development, a joint venture of Japan-based Itochu Corp, South Korea's STX Pan Ocean, and Bunge North America. [Despite high unemployment in Cowlitz County and the availability of hundreds of skilled union building trades workers, EGT imported the vast majority of its construction crews from low-wage communities out-of-state and did not pay area standard wages.]

As of press time, EGT had not yet signed a union contract, even though all

other grain export terminals from the river to the Puget Sound have successfully worked with local unions for decades.

"The industry standard is clearly laid out in the Northwest Grainhandler's Agreement that provides

for worker safety, manning and pay and benefits," said Leal Sundet, ILWU Coast committeeman and former Portland Local 8 president who's elected by all West Coast dockers to represent the longshore division's interests. "Our members from up and down the coast, from San Diego to Bellingham, want to see the standards of this agreement respected in Longview."

The Northwest is an important grain export region because national rail lines connect Midwest farms to deep-draft ports in Oregon and Washington. The grain is then loaded by ILWU members onto ships bound primarily for Asia. The need for grain overseas is increasing due to a growing middle class in China, and other factors.

"We're happy to see more grain coming West, and we're ready to do the work, which would require about 50 longshore workers a day," Coffman said.

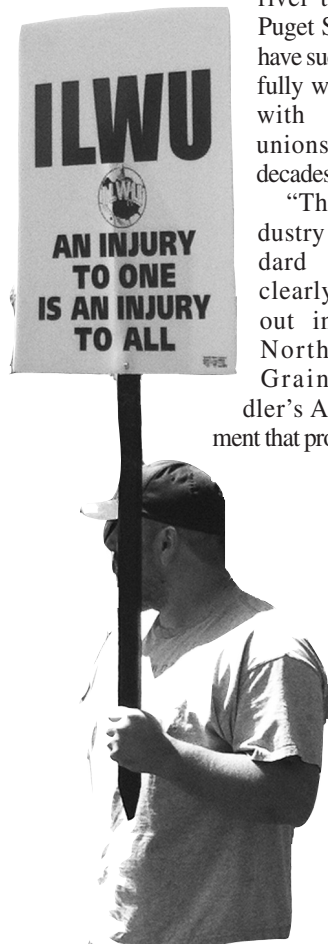
Coffman and Local 21 have garnered strong support for the local workforce from up and down the West Coast and beyond. When they announced that they would rally at EGT's corporate office in downtown Portland on June 3 (after this issue went to press), longshoremen from Washington chartered buses to attend, and delegations of longshore workers from California ports bought plane tickets to come and show their unwavering

support. When the union created a Facebook page to announce the rally, it got promises of support from as far away as Australia and New Zealand.

The ILWU's Coast Committee at the union's headquarters in San Francisco asked International Vice President Ray

Familathe to attend the rally in Portland and deliver this message on behalf of the entire West Coast:

"It's time for EGT to start respecting local workers and providing good jobs for the community. We'd all like to see this new terminal off to a good start."



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